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Statement submitted by Action Solidaire pour un Développement Entretenu à la Base, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Support for older persons in underdeveloped countries: need for the creation of a global fund for older persons

While many funds and programmes are being developed, few promote the rights and improved living conditions of older persons in poor and underdeveloped countries. Many studies show that, as things stand, the majority of older persons in poor countries do not have any social protection or social security coverage. As most of these older persons are farmers, they are not covered by any of the social security regimes such as do exist in the countries of the South. As a result, older persons live and die in miserable conditions, and suffer from illnesses that are initially benign but become serious, and from blindness, malnutrition and, above all, family abandonment. In Africa, for example, older persons are not placed in nursing homes, but remain with their families. On account of their social status and because they no longer have a source of income, they are left to fend for themselves. Claiming that they have to run around to provide for their family's well-being, family members do not give them the support that they need.

In some States, at the policy level, there are often no programmes to promote the inclusion and care of older persons. Only the very few individuals who were employed during their working age receive retirement or old-age pensions. It should be borne in mind that the children of today will be the elderly of tomorrow, and that, just as these children receive a great deal of attention today, so they should enjoy the same attention in their old age.

Substantial resources are therefore needed to address the needs of older persons in the countries of the South. The programmes and projects set up by civil society organizations are not operational, owing to a lack of resources. Because elder care is almost non-existent in those countries, life expectancy is very low (in Togo, it is 56.2 years), which adversely affects living conditions, and is thus a factor in early deaths.

We therefore call for a global fund for elderly care to be officially launched, following the same model as various other global funds. The United Nations must pilot this fund, which should involve the significant participation of underdeveloped countries and organizations accredited to the Economic and Social Council.

The objective of this fund is to ensure that no one is left behind and to achieve the direct funding of programmes and actions developed by civil society organizations. Even when directly addressing the worst affected States, the fund should not exclude civil society organizations in the way that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has done, as those organizations do most of the work on the ground. We would also like this fund to provide broad support for programmes and actions that directly benefit older persons, rather than social policies.